

# State Probers Reveal Schools Emphasize Play

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman

"Give me the right to educate your children and I'll have the right to dictate the future of your country." Probably no one has ever used those precise words, but the blunt fact remains that they are only too true, as we Americans are being rudely awakened to find out.

For too dangerously many years, we citizens, most of us parents of the next generation, have gone blithely along, calmly assuming that our state and nation are giving our children the finest — although most expensive — education known in history. But recent events have ripped much of the camouflage from our educational system, and have revealed a pretty shocking picture.

In its newest report, your Senate Investigating Committee on Education dispassionately reviews the documentary materials of the past 40 years prepared to guide teachers in all our California public schools in what to teach their pupils, and how to teach them. The penetrating analysis of the report makes no direct accusations, but reveals unmistakably how far our public school curriculum has been diverted from basic academic subjects, from our fundamental American principles of honesty, justice, thrift, and free competition between individuals, and from our traditional moral and spiritual values.

As the report traces this diversion from its onset in the teachers' guide of 1930 to its epidemic proportions in those for 1956 and 1957, it raises many basic questions as to the type of education our public schools are giving their pupils. The committee urges parents to secure these guides from their local schools, and to express their views to local school authorities about what they find in them.

In two instances, the committee report calls attention to the fact that current teachers' guides enable evasion of specific provisions of state law requiring teaching of certain subjects. The Education Code states, "A minimum of 50 per cent of each school week shall be devoted to reading, writing, language study, spelling, arithmetic and civics in grades one to six inclusive." But the 1956 guide says this about that particular bit of law, "But there is no law which specifies how instruction shall be organized. Responsibility for securing the most effective organization must be assumed by the professional personnel of each school district."

Again, the law requires that instruction be given in "patriotism." The committee dryly reports that the word itself was not found in checking through the guides.

The committee comments that though reading is admitted by all to be a basic subject, only 17 pages out of 615 is devoted to it in the 1957 guide. Writing is also an essential skill, but it gets only a short treatment — two pages. Arithmetic gets less space than "experience activity," only 21 pages.

"Experience activities (play) and manipulation with concrete objects receive much greater emphasis than drill," is the committee summary of this portion of its findings.

An especially noteworthy part of the report is that devoted to the part of the schools in controlling "mental health" of pupils. That term is defined to mean the "attitudes, behavior, and social and group adjustment" of each child. The teacher is expected to compile an extensive "cumulative record" of each child's mental health throughout his school life. Parents are not permitted to examine these records. The committee asks, "Does this mean that the schools have authority above the parents?"

In conclusion, the committee points to the need for serious teaching of science, language, and mathematics in order to fully equip our youth to meet the demands of today.

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